

Hebrews 1:4-2:4
Week of January 29, 2012

Text:

⁴**Having become** as much superior to **angels** as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. ⁵For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my **Son**, today I have **begotten** you"? [Ps 2:7] Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"? [2 Sam 7:14] ⁶And again, when he brings the **firstborn** into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." [Deut 32:43] ⁷Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels **winds**, and his ministers a **flame of fire**." [Ps 104:4] ⁸But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. ⁹You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions." [Ps 45:6, 7] ¹⁰And, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; ¹¹they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, ¹²like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end." [Ps 102:25-27] ¹³And to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my **right hand** until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? [Ps 110:1] ¹⁴Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

^{2:1}Therefore we must **pay much closer attention** to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ²For since the **message declared by angels** proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was **attested to us by those who heard**, ⁴while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Notes:

Having become – The Greek verb used here refers to a change of state, not a change of existence.

Angels – The Jews considered angels to be powerful and highly exalted beings. In Inter-testamental Judaism, a developed angelology, angelic hierarchies, and the invocation of angels can be found. For example, the Maccabean fighters invoked the unnamed angel that destroyed the army of Sennacherib during the time of Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:35). In many rabbinic literatures the influence of angels was inserted in Biblical narratives though none were mentioned in the actual text. For instance, some writings mention Sarah being protected from the Pharaoh by an angel holding a whip.

Son – This is a title of Christ expressing his essential deity and absolute equality with God.

Begotten – In John 3:16 the phrase "one and only begotten" is actually one Greek word, *monogenes*. It can mean being born from another or "being of the same kind, class or nature" as another. The definition is dependent on whether this word is accompanied by a definite article. With the definite article, *monogenes* points to a person's Identity – the son of a particular person. Without the definite article, *monogenes* points to the person's Nature – being of the same nature or kind as a particular person. When referring to Christ being begotten of the Father, *monogenes* is not accompanied with a definite article.

Firstborn – This refers to prominence of position or title. Christ holds the highest position of sovereignty.

Winds...flames of fire – This verse is stating that, at God's direction, angels can take different shapes. This reference is pointing to the angel's "mutability" or changeable nature. It also points to their submission to the will of God. As God chooses, his messengers change forms.

Right hand – The place of power, authority and honor.

Pay much closer attention – In Greek this phrase is two words. *Perissoteros* = "to be earnest, to a greater degree" & *Prosecho* = (nautical term) "to dock a ship."

Message declared by the angels – The Law of Moses. Angels were used to deliver God's law at Mt Sinai.

Attested to us by those who heard – The author establishes the validity of the message of Christ since this letter was written around 67-69 AD. The author gives reasons for why they can believe that Christ truly is who he said he is.

Discussion:

Spend a couple minutes on your own reading through the passage and the text notes.

1. Often in Scripture when confronted by angels, individuals would prostrate themselves and attempt to worship them. They were powerful, mystical beings and captivated the imagination of people. Nonetheless, the author of Hebrews convinces us that even these angels are inferior to Christ. If this passage were written today, what would serve as a similar contrast? What are those things that invoke worship and yet pale in comparison to Jesus? How are they inferior to Christ?
2. The author uses 7 OT passages to draw contrasts between Christ and the angels. Break up into smaller groups and analyze these contrasts. How is Christ superior to the angels?

	ANGELS	CHRIST
v. 5		
v. 6		
vv. 7-9		
vv. 10-12		
vv. 13-14		

3. Like a child who opens a present and throws out the gift in order to play with the box, so also these Jewish Christians have minimized the worth of Christ and have turned towards lesser things. Look back at the list of attributes of Christ. Which one do you most often minimize or forget?
4. In 2:1-4 the author of Hebrews brings up the main point of his argument. If Christ is superior to the angels, then the message of Christ is also superior to the message conveyed by the angels. John MacArthur writes: *If disobedience to the older covenant of law brought swift judgment, how much more severe will be the judgment of disobedience to the New Covenant of salvation, which was mediated by the Son who is superior to the angels? The messenger and message of the New Covenant are greater than the messengers and message of the older covenant.*

Even though this message of salvation is a superior message, we often “drift away” from it. The author is exhorting us to “dock” ourselves to Christ’s message and to “bind ourselves” to the Gospel of Salvation. Why is it so easy for us to drift from the amazing truth of our salvation? What can we do to “dock” ourselves to this message?

Split into smaller groups and lift up prayers of adoration and worship. Pray through the list of attributes of Christ. Try your best to not ask God for anything or to turn your focus upon yourself.